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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1176
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3212
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2598
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000080

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [MARR](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ PRESIDENT CONTINUES GOVERNMENT SHAKE-UP

REF: A. BISHKEK 44

[1](#)B. BISHKEK 47

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Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: President Bakiyev continued his government shake-up, dismissing several cabinet, administration, and local officials on January 23. Among the cabinet changes, Minister of Education Boljurova and Minister of Agriculture Nogoyev were fired. Foreign Policy Advisor Ryskulov, who gave the Ambassador early warning that Manas Air Base might be closed soon (Ref B), and Economic Policy Advisor Dikembayev were dismissed from the Office of the President. On January 26, the President's Office announced a number of appointments. First Vice Prime Minister Aidaraliyev moved over to become Minister of Agriculture, and former opposition member Omurbek Babanov was named First Vice Prime Minister. Kadyrbek Sarbayev, most recently Kyrgyz Ambassador to China, was appointed Foreign Minister, replacing Ednan Karabayev, who had resigned. Several vacancies remain, and several officials have yet to be reappointed, so the full impact of the changes remains to be seen. While we welcome a few of the dismissals, the net effect so far has been the loss of most of the Embassy's key interlocutors in the government. End Summary.

Bakiyev Dismisses Top Officials

[1](#)2. (U) Following the resignation earlier in the month of Chief of Staff Medet Sadyrkulov (Ref A), Vice Prime Minister Ibrahimova, and Foreign Minister Karabayev, all of whom were key Embassy contacts, President Bakiyev dismissed a number of top cabinet, administration, and local officials on January [1](#)23. Cabinet-level officials dismissed include First Vice Prime Minister Iskenderbek Aidaraliyev (later named Minister of Agriculture); Minister of Education Ishengul Boljurova and two deputy ministers of education; Minister of Agriculture Arstanbek Nogoyev; PM's Chief of Staff Murat Ismailov; and Deputy Minister of Finance Melis Mambetjanov. From the Presidential Administration, the embassy lost an important

contact in Foreign Policy Advisor Islan Ryskulov. Ryskulov was a key source for Kyrgyz administration views on Manas Air Base, and he had been frank with the Ambassador about how close Bakiyev was to closing the Base (Ref B). Economic Policy Advisor Azamat Dikembayev and Deputy Chief of Staff Dosaly Esenaliev also lost their jobs. Bakiyev also removed several regional officials, including Osh Mayor Jumadyl Isakov.

New Appointments Announced

13. (U) On January 26, the Kyrgyz White House announced a number of top appointments, filling many but not all of the vacant positions. Bakiyev made the following appointments:

--Kadyrbek Sarbayev as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Sarbayev had been Ambassador to China.

--Iskenderbek Aidaraliyev as Minister of Agriculture. He had been First Vice Prime Minister.

--Ruslan Kazakbekov as Deputy Foreign Minister. He had been Consul General in Istanbul.

--Baktygul Kalambekova as Deputy Foreign Minister. She has served as an advisor to the Foreign Minister.

--Kanybek Joroev as Deputy Chief of the Presidential Staff. He had been the Chief of the Department of Organizational Work and Public Policy at the Presidency.

--Nurlan Aitmurzayev as the PM's Chief of Staff. He had been

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Ambassador to Pakistan.

Sarbayev Named Foreign Minister

14. (U) On January 26, Bakiyev appointed Kadyrbek Sarbayev as Foreign Minister, replacing Ednan Karabayev, whose resignation had been accepted a week earlier. Sarbayev is a career diplomat, who has served as Kyrgyz Ambassador to China since July 2007. Prior to that, Sarbayev served as Deputy Foreign Minister from May 2005. In addition to other positions in the Ministry, Sarbayev had previous tours at the embassy in China, as well at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as Coordinator of the Kyrgyz staff from 2004-2005. He served as Counselor at the embassy in Germany from 1999 to 2001. Sarbayev was born in Bishkek in 1966.

15. (C) We know Sarbayev well from his time as Deputy Minister for Western Countries, and we have a generally favorable opinion of him. While he is a China specialist, we found him to be professional and accessible as Deputy Minister, if unwilling to go against the prevailing political winds.

Babanov Named First Vice Prime Minister

16. (C) In a surprising move, Bakiyev appointed businessman and former opposition member Omurbek Babanov as First Vice Prime Minister. Although he has kept a low profile over the past year, Babanov headed the party list for the opposition Social Democrats going into the December 2007 parliamentary elections. At the last minute, the Central Election Commission disqualified him, allegedly for holding a Kazakh passport. An MP in the previous parliament and former oil company owner, Babanov also was a part-owner of the independent "NTS" television station, which (in contrast to every other television station) presented balanced coverage of the November 2006 anti-government demonstrations. Babanov subsequently sold his interest in the station. Babanov was born in 1970, and his political power base is in the Talas region.

Comment

17. (C) The re-shuffling isn't over, and we expect more changes in personnel. Bakiyev has said that he wanted to bring in "young specialists" with a "new way of thinking." Some of our diplomatic colleagues have taken a negative view of the changes, describing this as an attempt by Bakiyev to get rid of anyone in the government with pro-Western views, and there is certainly ample evidence to support this analysis. We are nevertheless happy to see some of the dismissals, such as Minister of Education Boljurova and Minister of Agriculture Nogoyev, both of whom were difficult to work with on programs and issues. As with the earlier dismissal of Chief of Staff Sadyrkulov and Vice Prime Minister Ibraimova (Ref A), the Embassy has lost some key contacts, such as Foreign Minister Karabayev and the PM's Chief of Staff Ismailov, who worked closely with USAID. However, we view the appointment of Sarbayev as Foreign Minister as good news, and it is potentially good news that the smart and ambitious Babanov has returned to public life.

18. (C) Many of the officials dismissed were linked to Medet Sadyrkulov, who is rumored to be close to Bakiyev's son Maxim. Maxim, in turn, is believed to be locked in a struggle with Bakiyev's brother Janysh for succession rights. This has fueled speculation that these changes signal a rise in influence for Janysh, who has strong ties to Russia, and a corresponding waning, for now, of Maxim's influence.
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